

**DRAFT**  
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December 15, 2021

Aja Hazelhoff and Patrice Carroll, OPCD

RE: December 8th 2021 Updates Planned to the 2035 Seattle Comprehensive Plan from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Dear Aja and Patrice,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) appreciates your December 8<sup>th</sup> introduction to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan update. As we collectively consider Seattle's core values in race and social equity, and environmental stewardship, the Urban Forestry Commission encourages the Office of Planning and Community Development to include city-wide tree equity and the 30-percent canopy cover goals established within the Comp Plan for 2037, expanding to 40-percent in subsequent years. With planning, the growth of the urban forest canopy is achievable along with the growth of Seattle's population. As mentioned by the Commission, the 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment prepared for the Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE) is expected to be updated to the extent of tree canopy cover.

The Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. We are eager to collaborate with the OPCD in the updates to the 2035 comp plan in order to equitably increase Seattle's tree canopy cover by an additional 7 to 10 percent within the next fifteen years in fulfillment of the Comp Plan objectives.

**30% Tree Canopy Cover?**  
**Results**

**28%**

28% of Seattle's land is covered by tree canopy

$91,776 - 38,271 = 53,505$  this is the total land area without water

$15,167 / 53,505 = 28\%$  dividing the tree canopy area into the land area gives us the percent tree canopy cover

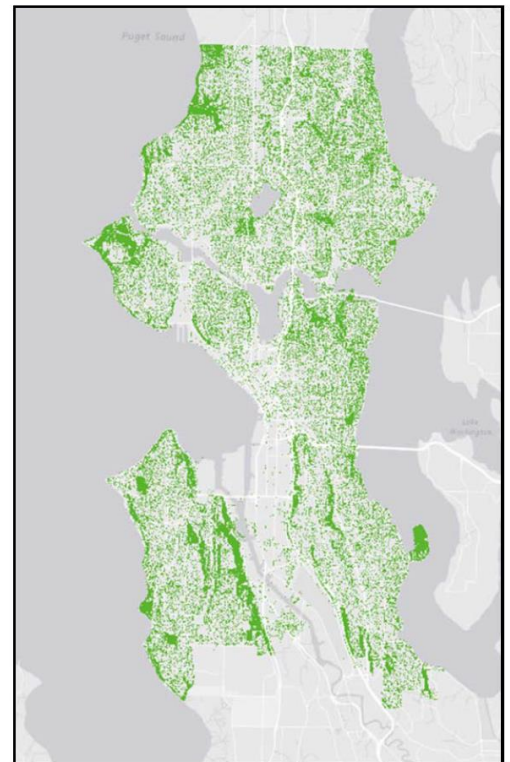


Figure 7. Tree Canopy at the city-scale derived from high-resolution imagery and LiDAR

We know that the tree canopy goals cannot be achieved within parks and right-of-way's alone. In fact, Table 1 within the 2016 assessment (included herein for reference) indicates that about two-thirds of the tree canopy will be within private land. Creating a 'roadmap' to achieve the tree canopy equity and environmental objectives within the next fifteen years will require thoughtful planning. We understand that the OPCD may incorporate the 2016 Tree Assessment data into the Comp Plan update in order to promote subsequent legislative considerations as advised by the Commission. For instance, given the assessment targets 33% Single-Family (Neighborhood Residential) and 20% Multi-Family Residential canopy goals, the city will need to modify existing tree protection and planting requirements within those management units accordingly.

Management Unit	Land area ( % of city)	2016 canopy cover	2037 canopy goal (set in 2007)	% contribution to city's canopy cover
Single-Family Residential	56%	32%	33%	63%
Multi-family Residential	11%	23%	20%	9%
Commercial/Mixed-use	8%	14%	15%	4%
Downtown	1%	10%	12%	<1%
Industrial	11%	6%	10%	2%
Institutional	2%	25%	20%	2%
Developed Parks	4%	34%	25%	6%
Parks' Natural Areas	7%	89%	80%	14%
<b>City total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Right-of-way (runs through all other MUs)	27%	23%	24%	22%

*Table 1. Percentage of city's landmass, current canopy cover, targets by MU and MU contribution to city's canopy cover*

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Please engage with the Commission often in 2022 as the Comp Plan is updated. We acknowledge the relevance of the tree canopy growth as density and population grows and have included herein (without edits) the relevant Comp Plan principles that should be maintained and strengthened to a livable, healthy, and equitable Seattle within this and future decades.

Commissioners,

Weston Brinkley, Past Chair

Julia Michalak, Chair Elect

Josh Morris, Chair Elect

Shari Selch, Chair Elect

## **Urban Forest references from the 2035 Seattle Comprehensive Plan**

### **Glossary Term; “urban forest”**

The trees and lower-growing plants that are found on public and private property within the city. This includes developed parks and natural areas, as well as the trees along streets and in yards. (p. 199)

### **Policies**

**GS 3.1** Encourage the preservation, protection, and restoration of Seattle’s distinctive natural features and landforms such as bluffs, beaches, streams, and remaining evergreen forests. (p. 33)

**P 3.4** Enhance wildlife habitat by restoring forests and expanding the tree canopy on City owned land.

### **Built Environment**

**GS 3.8** Encourage the preservation and expansion of the tree canopy throughout the city for the aesthetic, health and environmental benefits trees provide, considering first the residential and mixed-use areas with the least tree canopy in order to more equitably distribute the benefits to residents. (p. 34)

**LU 5.8** Establish tree and landscaping requirements that preserve and enhance the City’s physical and aesthetic character and recognize the value of trees and landscaping in addressing stormwater management, pollution reduction, heat island mitigation, and other issues. (p. 47)

**LU 6.13** Limit parking in City parks to discourage the use of park land for parking; where there is a demonstrated need for parking, design parking facilities in ways that preserve open space, green space, and trees and other mature vegetation. (p. 50)

**T 4.2** Enhance the public street tree canopy and landscaping in the street right-of-way. (p. 86)

### **Goal**

**U G4** Coordinate right-of-way activities among departments to meet transmission, distribution, and conveyance goals; to minimize the costs of infrastructure investment and maintenance; to manage stormwater; and to support other uses such as transportation, trees, and public space. (p. 121)

**EN 1.2** Strive to increase citywide tree canopy *coverage to 30 percent by 2037 and to 40 percent over time*. (p. 133)

**EN 1.3** Use trees, vegetation, green stormwater infrastructure, amended soil, green roofs, and other low-impact development features to meet drainage needs and reduce the impacts of development.

**EN 1.5** Promote sustainable management of public and private open spaces, trees, and vegetation by preserving or planting native and naturalized vegetation, removing invasive plants, improving soil health, using integrated pest management, and engaging the community in long-term stewardship activities.

**EN 1.7** Promote the care and retention of trees and groups of trees that enhance Seattle’s historical, cultural, recreational, environmental, and aesthetic character. (p. 133)

### **Environmental Policies**

**R-EP1** Protect and enhance the urban forest on public and private property to reduce storm runoff, absorb air pollutants, reduce noise, stabilize soil, and provide habitat. (p. 389)